

Beth Israel Lahey Health   
Beth Israel Deaconess  
Medical Center

**Community Benefits Advisory Committee (CBAC)**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, June 23, 2020, 5:00 PM - 6:20 PM**

**Held Virtually Via Zoom**

**Present:** Walter Armstrong, Elizabeth (Liz) Browne, Richard Giordano, Lauren Gabovitch, Jamie Goldfarb, Sarah Hamilton, Nancy Kasen, Barry Keppard, Phillomin Laptiste, Angie Liou, James Morton, Sandy Novack, Alex Oliver-Davila, Joanne Pokaski, Triniese Polk, Jane Powers, Luis Prado, Anna Spier, Robert Torres, LaShonda Walker-Robinson, Fred Wang

**Absent:** Tina Chery, Holly Oh, MD, Richard Rouse, Jerry Rubin

**Guests:** Carrie Jones, John Snow, Inc. (JSI), Coordinator; Madison MacLean, JSI, Consultant; Alec McKinney, JSI, Senior Project Director; Valerie Polletta, Health Resources in Action (HRiA), Associate Director, Research & Evaluation; Annie Rushman, HRiA, Senior Associate

Two members of the public were also in attendance.

**Welcome**

Nancy Kasen, Vice President, Community Benefits and Community Relations, Beth Israel Lahey Health (BILH), welcomed everyone to the meeting, including new Community Benefits Advisory Committee (CBAC) members and members of the public.

The minutes from the April 28th CBAC meeting were reviewed and accepted.

Nancy shared that a CBAC member passed away due to complications from COVID-19. A moment of silence was observed in their memory and for the countless others who have lost their lives over the last few months.

Nancy provided a brief update on Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Centers (BIDMC) Community Benefits activities. BIDMC continues its focus on COVID-19. Additional clinical services will be expanded as the state enters Phase 2. Community-wide testing sites remain open, as well as a social determinants health screening program at the Beth Israel Deaconess Healthcare (BIDHC) Chelsea testing site.

### **Public Comment**

Caitlin Abber from the Allston-Brighton Substance Abuse Task Force shared that COVID-19 has impacted youth substance use and mental health significantly. They said that it is a critical time for this work, especially among youth. Boston high school students use substances at significantly higher rates than other districts under normal circumstances and rates are expected to increase due to the pandemic. Family members of these young people may also be using substances at increased rates. Many youth are experiencing heightened stress and social isolation, and may lack healthy coping mechanisms. This demographic is in need of support.

No written comments were received.

### **Check-in**

Nancy acknowledged the unprecedented challenges many of our communities are facing during this time. She encouraged members of the CBAC to share what they and their communities have been experiencing as well as any needs/concerns that have emerged.

One CBAC member shared that the Latinx community is being particularly hard-hit. They said that not everyone wants things to just go back to normal as we begin to emerge from the height of the pandemic. Advocacy around policy changes and increased support for vulnerable communities is vitally important.

Another member shared that April and May have been relatively stable for the Chinatown community compared to March, but supplemental payments are going to run out on July 31<sup>st</sup> and the eviction moratorium is set to expire at the end of August. The community is bracing for a housing crisis late this summer. From a policy standpoint, these are issues in need of advocacy work. Restaurants in Chinatown are also not yet opening for outdoor or indoor dining.

Heightened levels of food insecurity was another big issue brought up in the conversation. The YMCA has delivered one million meals in the past three months. The Boston Public Schools have delivered another 700,000 meals and the need continues to increase. When the support runs out, the insecurity will increase. Additionally, childcare is now more in need. Many childcare providers have closed permanently. Many more families can no longer afford the costs of childcare outside the home.

### **Review of Health Priorities, Sub-Priorities, and Allocation Determinations**

Nancy reviewed the health priority areas, sub-priorities, and allocations that the New Inpatient Building Community-based Health Initiative (NIB CHI) Community Advisory Committee, the CBAC's antecedent voted to fund on September 24th, 2019 and that were approved by the Department of Public Health (DPH) on December 24th, 2019. The priority areas are: Housing Affordability (40%, \$7.4 million), Jobs & Financial Security (30%, \$5.5 million), Behavioral Health (15%, \$2.8 million), Healthy Neighborhoods (15%, \$2.8 million).

Prior to the COVID pandemic, BIDMC's original intent was to launch a Request for Proposal (RFP) in April for the housing, jobs, and behavioral health priority areas, totaling approximately \$6.5 million. The Healthy Neighborhoods funding was to be allocated neighborhood-by-neighborhood over a period of several years.

Nancy shared a high-level overview of the original timeline and process. Due to COVID-19, the RFP process was put on hold.

Nancy shared current thoughts about the CHI funding. First, BIDMC would like to honor the original intentions, process, community engagement and transparent efforts that have taken place to date. Additionally, BIDMC recognizes that circumstances have changed drastically and so the original plans may need to pivot to some degree.

Robert Torres, BIDMC's Director of Community Benefits, introduced two possible paths forward. Option A would involve maintaining the same priority areas, updating the framing and focus to acknowledge recent events, altering the timeline, structuring, strategies, focusing populations to ensure responsiveness to the current moment, and incorporating a greater focus on policy. Option B would involve pivoting to focus on the more emergent needs that have arisen (e.g. police violence, food access, the digital learning divide, telehealth access). Robert acknowledged that the second option may require further discussion, community engagement, answering questions provided by DPH, and seeking review and approval from DPH.

Robert shared that while BIDMC had a preference to pursue option A, BIDMC values the input of the CBAC and welcomed dialogue and discussion on both options to inform next steps. BIDMC's reasoning for moving ahead with option A was that:

- The original prioritization process was lengthy and transparent and included significant community engagement. BIDMC fully adopted the priority areas and allocations vetted, agreed and recommended by the NIB CHI Advisory Committee..
- The priority areas and strategies are still relevant today, and BIDMC does not want to lose momentum.
- BIDMC would like to start distributing funding sooner rather than later, and pivoting could delay this process.
- Funding is already allocated to multiple priorities and adding additional priorities makes the funding amounts smaller for each category, which could make it harder to effect systems change.
- Other funders are stepping in to cover some of the more emergent needs that have arisen due to COVID-19 (e.g. food access).

Robert then shared guidance received from DPH about any proposal to reallocate CHI resources. The questions posed by DPH are intended to guide discussion when considering the reallocation of funds and to ensure the CHI principles are being upheld; that shifting resources are not duplicating efforts; and that funds are not shifted to urgent needs at the expense of sustainable systems change in the future.

DPH's questions are:

"Does the proposed reallocation of CHI resources:

1. Continue to uphold CHI principles by addressing inequities in the social determinants of health and their impacts?
2. Shift the approach in a previously determined strategy or is it wholly new (e.g. a hospital had a previously approved strategy to address housing instability and is proposing to reallocate resources to address immediate housing needs)?
3. Meet an identified gap that other resources are not filling? Foundations and government agencies are rapidly making and implementing plans to address the social impacts of COVID-19. How does the hospital know that the identified issue will not be addressed otherwise?
4. Understand the consequences of reallocating resources to meet an immediate need recognizing that this will be a long event that will have impacts for the foreseeable future?
5. Shift resources away from communities, needs, priorities, and strategies arrived at through meaningful community engagement decision making practices, and mean not ever shifting them back, i.e. does the reallocation mean those plans never get implemented? Are the critically urgent and important immediate needs being met at the expense of sustainable systems change down the line? Are resources being shifted from organizations that would otherwise be supported by the previously planned/implemented CHI?
6. Have input from the CHI Advisory committee?"

### **Initial Poll**

Anna Spier, BIDMC's Manager of Community Benefits, then launched an initial anonymous poll to solicit input from the CBAC about the options discussed. Results showed that 84% of respondents chose "Option A," 11% chose "Option B" and 5% chose "I'm not sure yet."

### **Discussion**

Robert then moderated a discussion of the poll results.

One CBAC member shared that these times represent uncharted territory. Systemic issues are being addressed in unprecedented ways. Inequality has worsened, but the priority areas that were originally identified still apply to the current situation, with some adjustments. Efforts should also be made to encourage people and resources to go towards policy change and advocacy.

Another member shared that before the meeting they felt more torn about option A vs. B, but now they feel a strong sense of urgency to get the funds into the community and not delay by pivoting too significantly.

Another member agreed. The pandemic crystalized the inequities that many people knew existed. The areas of focus remain relevant and help to address some of the root causes.

A member voiced that their preference is to "adjust the stay the course," meaning the priority areas are sound but there should be an additional qualifier that proposals that address racial disparities (in housing, job training, mental health, etc., all of which have been highlighted through the COVID pandemic) might be given preference during the evaluation process. This sentiment was echoed by

several other members of the CBAC. BIDMC noted that the Allocation Committee had already provided this input and this was reflected in the RFP language.

Another member said that they were surprised by the poll results which showed a significant preference for Option A. The communities these funds were allocated to help have never needed support as much as they do now. There are unparalleled losses and unparalleled needs that must be mitigated by unparalleled giving. The experiences of the CBAC members are not representative of the experiences of many community members. For example, CBAC members can generally work from home comfortably and have basic provisions. The unemployment checks are not enough and many families do not qualify for that assistance. Direct aid needs to be given to these individuals. Unprecedented giving is required, and this CBAC has a unique opportunity to provide it with these funds. These priorities might still be appropriate, but the exact allocation needs to be intentionally COVID-centered.

Many more members of the committee added to the discussion and came to consensus that intentional wording should be included in the RFP regarding allocation of funding and addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. They also discussed that additional wording should be added to ensure that organizations being funded align with the values of the CBAC (for example, diversity of leadership and commitment to racial equity). Representatives from BIDMC said that the RFP selection criteria already incorporate this language.

One member shared that funders to a health center have been navigating this situation by explicitly asking whether the funds will be used for COVID-related purposes and allowing grant proposals to be shifted. This has been helpful for the health center.

Another member asked whether there is currently a way to identify gaps in specific neighborhoods in response to COVID. One suggestion was to request that applicants for Healthy Neighborhoods funding identify other funds they are leveraging.

### **Follow-up Poll**

Anna launched a follow-up poll that asked the same question as above; which of the following most resonates with you right now? 89% of respondents selected "Option A", 11% selected "Option B", and no respondents selected "I'm not sure yet."

BIDMC wrapped up the discussion and provided a summary of the polling that showed a large majority of CBAC members choosing Option A. Due to the reasonable consensus reached, the decision was made to move ahead with the original selected health priorities and release the RFP in an expeditious manner with an acknowledgment of the effects of COVID-19 and a greater emphasis on addressing racial inequality.

### **Next Steps**

Nancy shared that a small working group will be created to finalize selection criteria for the Healthy Neighborhoods category of funds. The commitment for the working group will be 2-3 calls over the summer. This group will bring back results to the next meeting.

Several CBAC members volunteered to participate in this working group.

**Adjourn**

Nancy thanked everyone for joining and reminded everyone that the next scheduled meeting is September 22 from 5-7 pm.